

THE SPY WHO NEVER WAS Gabi's Deadly 'Game' Turned Into Reality

CPYRGHT

ON MARCH 26, an American girl named Gabriele Hammerstein emerged from 27 months in East German and Russian jails — and from an adventure more fantastic than any Ian Fleming ever dreamed up for James Bond. This is the first article in an exclusive series which discloses how she got involved with the Communist secret police, and the amazing experiences this involvement led to. Miss Hammerstein is recuperating in Queens, N.Y., where she lives with her mother. Her story has been substantiated.

CPYRGHT

By GABRIELE HAMMERSTEIN

(As Told To Peter Hahn)

(Copyright, 1964, by North American Newspaper Alliance, Inc.)

NEW YORK — All my troubles began because I wanted to stay out of trouble.

It started Sept. 1, 1960, when I arrived in West Berlin, where I intended to live while singing for the famous Staats (state opera house) in the Soviet sector.

I had no qualms about singing for the East Berlin opera. There were a number of well-known and loyal Americans working at the Komische Oper (comic opera theater) in the same part of the city.

I was arranging the furniture of my new apartment in Halensee, a pleasant suburb in the British sector, when the phone rang.

A heavily accented voice said, "Miss Hammerstein, you mentioned the last time we met that I should stop by for coffee when I'm in West Berlin. May I accept your offer?"



GABRIELE

I remembered the caller immediately. He was Mr. Waulen, the cultural attache of the Soviet Embassy in East Berlin. I met him while negotiating my contract with the Staatsoper during a previous visit.

Waulen explained that he was with a colleague "who works in my office." Could he bring him along? I said sure.

Waulen carried a huge bouquet of flowers. He introduced his friend as Aleksey Rakov, Alyosha for short. We had a pleasant visit.

Just before leaving, Alyosha said, "I'm organizing a soiree for our embassy. Would you like to sing a few songs for us? It might be good for your career, because some important music critics will be there."

I gladly accepted. The performance was to be a few weeks hence.

The next day I stopped in at the U.S. Consulate, where I had made regular visits during my previous stay in Berlin. Mr. Burke, the consul, had become a kind of fatherly adviser to me.

"Hold it, Gabi," he said. "There's something wrong here!" He explained that no other American had ever been asked to perform at such a function.

He called in another man, who identified himself as Robert Bennett, of the U.S. Commandant's Public Safety Division. (I later learned that Bennett worked for the CIA).

Bennett listened to my story, and then told me: "Go ahead, but when you get back, I'd like you to tell me whom you met, what they talked about and whatever else happens at the party."

Bennett asked me to memorize an unlisted number, and call him "immediately after my return from the singing engagement." I promised I would, even though I didn't like the idea.

I wanted to avoid doing anything which would jeopardize my permit to stay in Berlin. I wanted nothing to interfere with my first big singing break at the opera house.

During the following week, Rakov met me in East Berlin and handed me a sheaf of Russian music. He took me to dinner.

He talked to me in German, my native language. My parents, both doctors, fled from the Nazis in 1935, taking my brother, sister and me to the United States.

On the evening of my singing engagement at the embassy, I drove to the Staatsoper. Rakov was waiting for me. He motioned for me to park my car, and I assumed we would walk the rest of the way — the Soviet embassy is only two or three blocks away. Instead, we got into his car.

Continued